CULTURE BRIGHT:

A WINTER ESSAY SERIES

Reflections on art, culture, and the future *of the Quad Cities from* ***Linda Bowers,*** *Board Chair of The Cultural Trust.*

Stories of Resilience



"Audiences see the performance. They may never see what it took to keep the doors open."

Dolly Parton gave people songs for the hard chapters.

She understood how much a story could carry. In "Coat of Many Colors," a coat her mother stitched from scraps became a story about love, dignity, and finding worth when others fail to see it.

That instinct reached beyond her music. Inspired by her father's inability to read and write, Dolly created the Imagination Library to put books into children's hands. When wildfires devastated her Tennessee community, her foundation helped families who had lost their homes.

She remembered what hardship felt like. And she used what she had to help.

That is a kind of resilience worth celebrating. It is also why a Dolly Parton tribute feels at home in the Culture Bright Winter Series.

Here in the Quad Cities, I see people practicing that same determination to care for their community, even when circumstances make it difficult.

Sometimes, the challenge arrives in the forecast.

Rain changes plans for a concert at the Quad City Botanical Center. Teams move to higher ground or work with another venue. Ice threatens a family outing at the Putnam Museum and Science Center. Staff prepare the entrances and help guests get inside. A downpour interrupts a Pops concert, and audiences gather beneath umbrellas, hoping to hear the finale.

Behind each evening are people making decisions, adjusting plans, and helping one another carry on.

At Common Chord, Executive Director Tyson Danner knows how quickly the Mississippi River can rewrite a workday. When flooding threatens the historic Redstone Building, protecting a place built for music becomes work involving sandbags, staff, volunteers, and long hours.

Audiences see the performance. They may never see what it took to keep the doors open.

Other challenges happen far from the stage.

Jen Lewis-Snyder, President and CEO of The Cultural Trust, and Cindy Diehl-Yang at the Putnam have each faced seasons when their husbands needed extended hospital care. Children still needed them. Their organizations still needed decisions. Meetings and messages followed them into hospital waiting rooms.

Those responsibilities do not fit neatly into separate parts of a day.

I admire their commitment. I also know that resilience takes support. Leaders need colleagues, families, and friends who can help carry the weight. Our cultural organizations need that same care from the communities they serve.

And Quad Citizens keep showing up.

You came to the Culture Bright Summer Series through heat and rain. When the season changes, you return to the Botanical Center on cold evenings, with cocoa in hand and children eager to follow the lights. You buy tickets, volunteer, bring friends, and give these places reasons to keep creating.

Today gave us so many reasons to come together through art and culture. Tomorrow, we'll gather again, with a different song in our hearts.

Together, Common Chord and The Cultural Trust will present Hard Candy Christmas, a Dolly Parton tribute at the Redstone Room, carrying the light of Culture Bright into a night dressed in pink and held together by song.

Rhonda Vincent, Dolly's friend and musical collaborator, will headline the evening, joined by local artists lending their voices to honor her music and generosity. Proceeds will support cancer research and treatment at the University of Iowa's Holden Comprehensive Cancer Center.

For families facing cancer, the need for care, research, and support reaches well beyond a single evening. This concert gives us a way to contribute while celebrating someone who made helping others part of her legacy.

There will be pink. There will be familiar songs. And there will be people gathered in a room that has carried its own share of challenges, using music to do some good.

Wear something Dolly would appreciate. Bring someone whose company you love.

Doors open at 5 p.m. The music begins at 6 p.m.

Find the series lineup and ticket information at CultureBright.org.

Culture Matters Here.
And it always will.

Come see why Culture Matters Here. And why it always will.

To learn more about the Culture Bright Winter Series go to CultureBright.org.

The Cultural Trust

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